

THE HAND'S ARRIVAL

The Shoot

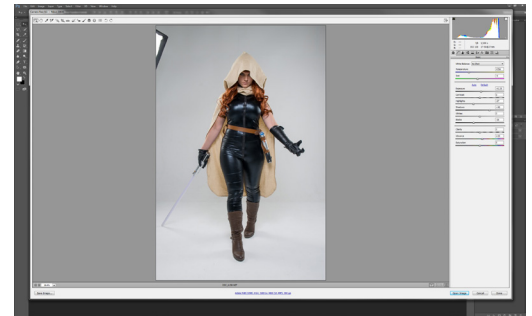
The shoot was part of a workshop I held in the UK. We came up with a few cool poses for the model that day, but this was the one that inspired me the most. I loved the idea of her dragging her saber across the floor and it hissing and sparking as she walked.

RAW Processing

Once I have chosen the image I want to use, I drag it into Adobe Camera RAW (ACR).

I don't do much in ACR; I simply brighten the shadows and darken the highlights and White sliders to make sure I keep the detail.

I also sharpen the images slightly. Once done, I click open.



Cut out

To cut out the model from the background, I use the Quick Selection tool in Photoshop.

Once a basic selection is done, I click 'refine edge' at the top while on a selection tool.

I increase the contrast by about one quarter, and give the shift edge slider a -10 value to create a cleaner edge.

Then, I click on the Quick Mask button at the bottom of the tools palette. If you're following along with your own image, you will find that now everything selected turns red.

I can now zoom in and paint round the edges of the model with black or white to adjust the selection and remove unwanted areas etc.

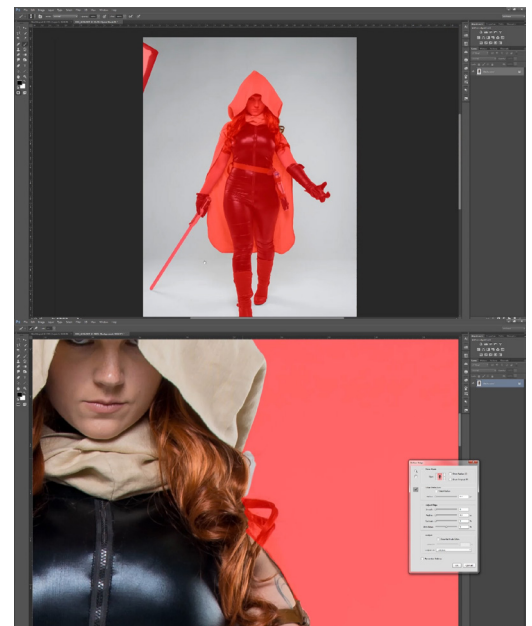
I leave the hair for now.

Once done, I turn off the quick mask, return to a selection tool and click on refine edge.

I can now zoom in (use the ctrl & + or ctrl & - key strokes to do this), and paint over the hair. Refine edge usually does a good job of picking out these fine lines/hairs.

I finish by clicking on "Decontaminate Colors" and click ok.

This will create a new layer with a layer mask on it to remove the background.



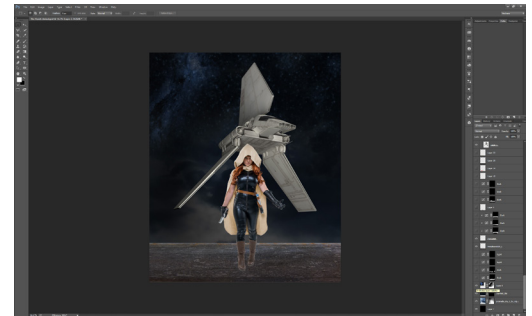
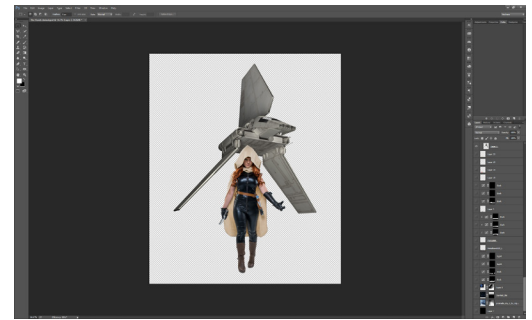
3D Model

For this image, I used a 3D model of a Star Wars Spaceship, which I found on an online stock site. I positioned and lit the model using Photoshop CC's 3D tools and rendered it out before importing the image into the Canvas with the model.

Background

I now start to create the background by using stock textures (you can find stock images online that you can legally use from sites such as textures.com and DeviantArt) of metal and concrete to create a ground plane. Using the Transform tool, I put them into the correct perspective beneath the model.

The sky is made from more stock images of clouds and star fields, blended together using Layer Masks and Blending modes.



Working Non-Destructively

Throughout this process I am always trying to work as non-destructively as possible.

The following tools help ensure that I don't permanently alter the pixels that make up the image.

Layer Masks:

This is a way of hiding part of a layer by masking it out. It's still there, it's just hidden. You can apply a layer mask by clicking the button with the square with the circle inside it icon at the bottom of the layers panel.

Clipping Masks:

Hold Down "Alt" and hover between two layers in the Layers Panel to see a little square and arrow icon appear, click to apply a clipping mask.

The contents of the top layer of the two layers you were between will now only be visible above the contents of the layer below.

Blending modes:

When you have a layer selected, you will see a button in the top of the layers panel with the word "Normal" in it. Click it to see a list pop up. These are blending modes. Clicking one changes the way your selected layer interacts with the layers beneath it. Experiment to see that they do.

Adjustment Layers:

These are effects that are on a separate layer; their settings affect everything below it. You can apply Layer masks, Clipping Masks and Blending Modes to Adjustment layers. Adjustment layers also have their own panel that you can open.

Adding Textures to the 3D Model

The 3D model looks very much like a model rather than a real ship, so I use additional stock images of rust and texture, that I change to a blending mode (usually either Multiply, Screen, Lighten or Overlay) and transform and overlay the Spaceship with them to give it a more weathered feel.

Lightsaber

The Lightsaber is created by using a straight line on a new layer that I paint into place with a pure white color.

(Hold Down Shift to snap your brush to a straight line)

Then I use an outer glow layer style on that layer to add a red glow to the blade, and a very small inner glow of the same red.

Layer styles can be added to your chosen layer by clicking the "Fx" button at the bottom of the layers panel.

Dodge and Burn

With the elements in place, I then apply non destructive dodging and burning.

I use masked curves adjustment layers to do this and use this effect to add in shadows, and highlights.

I also changed the color of the Shuttle by adding a Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layer, clipping it to the shuttle and lowering the saturation.

Effects

The image should now be coming along nicely. I add mist around the Saber using a custom brush (these can be found on places like deviantART, but you can also make your own very easily) and draw the Force lightning in where I want it and add an outer glow layer style.

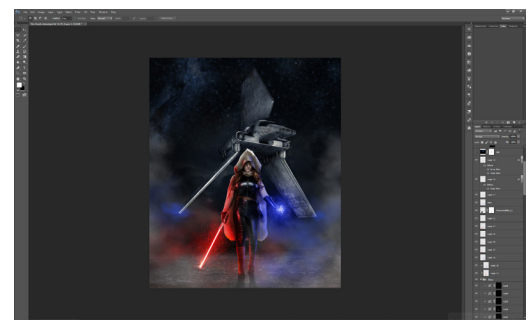
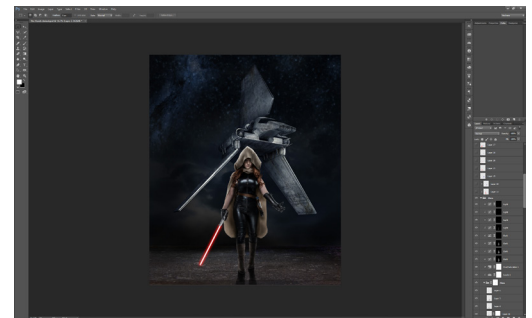
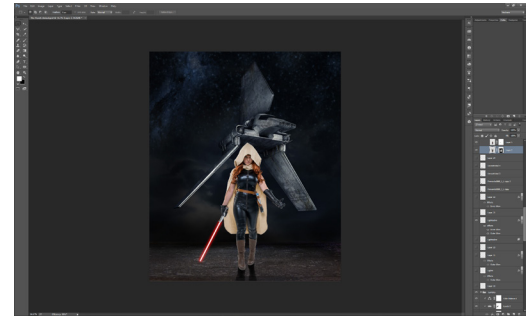
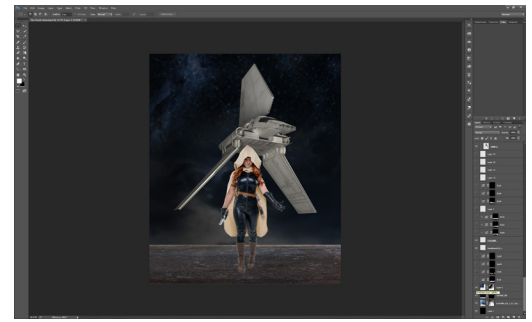
I also add in mist and kicked up dust with more custom brushes around the ship and model.

Sparks are added to the Saber using stock images (which also have the Screen blending mode applied to them).

The Glow from the Saber and the Force Lighting is created on a new layer, with Color Blending mode. Then it's a case of simply painting in where I want the glow to be.

You can use a Clipping mask if you want it to just affect one thing, such as the model.

Finally for the effects, I add the flare which is a stock image, and apply a Screen blending mode.



Unify the image

This is achieved using a few techniques, such as a Color Balance Adjustment Layer at the top of the layer stack, or by creating a merged layer at the top of the layer stack. (Select all, Edit> copy Merged, Edit> Paste)

Should you wish, you can then (with the merged layer selected) go back into the Camera RAW filter to add some global adjustments.

